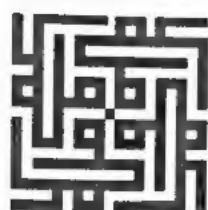


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Shapira, Shimon. "The Origins of Hizballah." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 46 (Spring 1988): 115-130. Provides useful information on the background of some of Lebanese Hizbullāh's leading personalities and their ties to Iran.

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### Hizbullāh in Lebanon

A political and social movement that arose among Lebanon's Shī'īs in response to the Islamic revolution in Iran, Hizbullāh means the "Party of God," after the Qur'ān (5:56): "Lo! the Party of God, they are the victorious." During the 1980s, Hizbullāh drew on Iranian support to become a major political force in Lebanon and the Middle East. It gained international renown, first for its attacks against the American, French, and Israeli forces deployed in parts of Lebanon, and later for its holding of Western hostages. Hizbullāh also emerged as the major rival of the established Amal movement for the loyalty of Lebanon's Shī'īs. Hizbullāh's declared objective has been the transformation of Lebanon (and the region) into an Islamic state, a goal it has pursued by diversified means, ranging from acts of violence to participation in parliamentary elections.

**Origins.** The foundations of Hizbullāh were laid years before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 in the ties that bound the Shī'ī *'ulamā'* (religious scholars) of Iran and Lebanon. Many of these *'ulamā'* were schooled together in the Shī'ī theological academies in Iraq, especially in the shrine city of Najaf. During the late 1950s and 1960s, these academies became active in formulating an Islamic response to nationalism and secularism. Prominent *'ulamā'* lectured and wrote on Islamic government, Islamic economics, and the ideal Islamic state. In Najaf, the Iraqi ayatollah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and the exiled Iranian ayatollah Ruhollah al-Musavi Khomeini both subjected the existing political order to an Islamic critique. Lebanese *'ulamā'* and theological students overheard and joined in these debates.

Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh, the future mentor of Hizbullāh, was an exemplary product of Najaf's mix of scholasticism and radicalism. Faḍlallāh was born and schooled in Najaf, where his father, a scholar from south Lebanon, had come to study. Faḍlallāh imbibed the ideas then current in Najaf and went to Lebanon in 1966, where he made his Beirut *ḥusayniyah* (a Shī'ī congregation house) into a center of Islamic activism. Sayyid Mūsā al-Ṣadr dominated the Shī'ī scene at

the time, and Faḍlallāh had a modest following. But in the 1970s, Faḍlallāh received an important reinforcement: Iraqi authorities expelled about a hundred Lebanese theology students as part of a crackdown on Shī'ī activism in the shrine cities. The expelled students became disciples of Faḍlallāh on their return to Lebanon and later formed the core of Hizbullāh. [See Najaf and the biography of Ṣadr.]

In Iran the early foundations of Hizbullāh were laid by members of the Islamic opposition who found refuge in war-torn Lebanon during the 1970s. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) took this opposition under its wing and provided the Iranian dissidents with training and forged documents. Graduates of the Palestinian camps included Muḥammad Muntazirī, the son of a leading opposition cleric and future founder of the Liberation Movements Department of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, and 'Alī Akbar Muḥtashimī, future Iranian ambassador to Syria, who was to play a critical role in the creation of Hizbullāh. Both men arrived in Lebanon from Najaf, where they had studied under Khomeini, and both joined Khomeini in Paris in 1978.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Shī'ī traffic between Lebanon and Iran intensified. Faḍlallāh and his disciples became frequent visitors to Iran, while former Iranian dissidents who had spent time in Lebanon returned as emissaries of the Islamic revolution. Muḥammad Muntazirī made the first attempt, in 1979, to send six hundred Iranian volunteers to Lebanon, where they proposed to launch a *jihād* against Israel. However, the Lebanese government successfully appealed to Syria to block the entry of the volunteers, and most got no further than Damascus. Muntazirī, who accused "liberals" in Iran's government of failing to support his mission, died in a Tehran bombing in 1981.

The obstacles to an effective partnership between Lebanon's Shī'īs and Iran lifted only in 1982, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the deployment of American and French peacekeeping forces in Beirut. Syria, although defeated in battle, was determined to drive all other foreign forces out of Lebanon by encouraging popular resistance, especially among the Shī'īs. Many Shī'īs were receptive, believing that Israel and the West planned to restore Maronite privilege by force. When Iran offered to assist in mobilizing the Shī'īs, Syria approved, permitting Iran to send about a thousand Revolutionary Guards to the Bekaa (Biqā') Valley in eastern Lebanon. There they seized a Lebanese army barracks and turned it into their operational base.

Emboldened by the arrival of the Iranians, Faḍlallāh and a number of young *'ulamā'* declared *jihād* against the Western and Israeli presence in Lebanon while pledging their allegiance to Khomeini. Similarly, a faction of the Amal militia led by a former schoolteacher, Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī, went over to the Revolutionary Guards, accusing the Amal movement of failing to resist Israel's invasion. Iran's ambassador to Damascus, 'Alī Akbar Muḥtashimī (appointed in 1981), established a council to govern the new movement. The council included the Iranian ambassador, Lebanese *'ulamā'*, and security strongmen responsible for secret operations and the movement's militia. Later, the council created the post of secretary general, held successively by Shaykh Ṣubḥī al-Ṭufaylī, Sayyid 'Abbās al-Mūsawī, and Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallāh. Faḍlallāh declined all formal office, but his rhetorical genius and seniority assured his moral prestige in the movement.

The movement drew its support from two components of Shī'ī society. It especially appealed to some of the larger Shī'ī clans of the Bekaa Valley, for whom the war in Lebanon had brought prosperity fueled by the expansion of smuggling and hashish and opium cultivation. The leadership of the Amal movement, based on the Shī'ī professional and commercial classes, made insufficient room for this emerging counterelite of the Bekaa Valley. With the encouragement of the Iranian emissaries based in the valley, the clans flocked to Hizbullāh. Ba'labakk, capital of the Bekaa Province, practically became an autonomous zone for Hizbullāh. Its buildings were plastered with posters of Khomeini and draped with Iranian flags.

The message of Hizbullāh also appealed to the Shī'ī refugees who had been forced by war into the dismal slums of southern Beirut. They included the Shī'īs driven from their homes in the Phalangist assault on Palestinians in eastern Beirut (Nab'a and Burj Ḥammūd) in 1976 and many more who fled the south following the Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982. Faḍlallāh personified their grievance. His ancestral villages in the south (Bint Jubayl and 'Aynātā) had come under Israeli assault, then occupation; he lost his first pulpit in Nab'a during the Phalangist siege of 1976. These Shī'ī refugees felt a strong sense of identification with the Palestinians and a deep resentment against Israel, the Phalangists, and the West. Many young Shī'ī refugees even joined Palestinian organizations during the 1970s, from which they acquired fighting experience. When Israel forced these organizations from Beirut in 1982, Shī'ī

fighters who were left behind joined Hizbullāh, which promised to continue their struggle.

**Jihād against the West and Israel.** Hizbullāh systematically formulated its doctrine in its "open letter" of 1985. "We are proceeding toward a battle with vice at its very roots," declared the letter, "and the first root of vice is America." The letter set four objectives for the movement: the termination of all American and French influence in Lebanon; Israel's complete departure from Lebanon "as a prelude to its final obliteration"; submission of the Lebanese Phalangists to "just rule" and trial for their "crimes"; and granting the people the right to choose their own system of government, "keeping in mind that we do not hide our commitment to the rule of Islam."

From the outset, Hizbullāh conducted its struggle on three discrete levels—open, semiclandestine, and clandestine. Faḍlallāh and the *'ulamā'* openly preached the message of resistance to Islam's enemies and fealty to Khomeini in mosques and *ḥusaniyah*, which became the focal points for public rallies. The Revolutionary Guards trained the semiclandestine Islamic Resistance, a militia-like formation which attacked Israeli forces in south Lebanon. The Organization of the Islamic Jihad, the clandestine branch of the movement, operated against Western targets. It was reputedly led by 'Imād Muḥniyah, a shadowy Shī'ī figure from south Lebanon and a veteran of Palestinian service, who became the subject of much lore during the 1980s.

The violence of Islamic Jihad catapulted Hizbullāh to prominence. Assassinations of individual foreigners escalated into massive bombings, some of them done by "self-martyrs," which destroyed the U.S. embassy and its annex in two separate attacks in 1983 and 1984; the Beirut barracks of American and French peacekeeping troops in two attacks on the same morning in 1983; and command facilities of Israeli forces in the south in 1982 and 1983. Hundreds of foreigners died in these bombings, the most successful of which killed 241 U.S. marines in their barracks. As a result, the United States and France withdrew their forces from Lebanon; Israel, whose forces also came under attack by the Islamic Resistance, retreated to a narrow "security zone" in the south. In solidarity with Iran, Islamic Jihad also bombed the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait in 1983, in an effort to compel Kuwait to abandon its support of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War. Hizbullāh activists were also responsible for a spate of fatal bombings in Paris in 1986, meant to force France to abandon its policy of supplying Iraq with arms.

Hizbullāh also conducted operations to free members who had been imprisoned by governments in the Middle East and Europe. These operations included the hijacking of an American airliner in 1985, to secure the freedom of Lebanese Shī'is held by Israel, and two hijackings of Kuwaiti airliners in 1984 and 1988, to win freedom for Lebanese Shī'is held by Kuwait for the bombings there. The hijackers killed passengers in each instance to demonstrate their resolve. In addition, Islamic Jihad and other groups affiliated with Hizbullāh abducted dozens of foreigners in Lebanon, mostly American, French, British, and German citizens, for the same purpose. Some of these foreigners were traded for American arms needed by Iran in the Iran-Iraq War, but the motive for the wave of abductions remained the release of Hizbullāh's imprisoned fighters elsewhere. Only when the hostage holding became a political burden for Iran did it prevail on Hizbullāh to free the hostages. The last French hostages were freed in 1988; the last American and British hostages in 1991; and the last Germans in 1992.

Although the movement's *'ulamā'* disavowed all direct knowledge of operations, and occasionally expressed reservations, they harvested the credit (and blame) for Hizbullāh's *jihād*. Their mosques filled to overflowing, and their statements and interviews resonated in the media. However, they themselves became the targets of assassination and abduction. Faḍlallāh narrowly missed death in a massive car bombing in 1985, which killed eighty persons; Israel abducted a local Hizbullāh cleric, Shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm 'Ubayd, in 1988; and Israeli helicopter gunships killed Hizbullāh's secretary general, Sayyid 'Abbās al-Mūsawī, and his family, in an attack on his motorcade in 1992.

Hizbullāh also found that its growing appeal among Lebanon's Shī'is made enemies within the existing Amal movement. As Hizbullāh gained momentum, it sought unimpeded access to the south, so it could promote the struggle against Israel. Amal regarded this as an encroachment on its last strongholds. Beginning in 1988, occasional skirmishes with Amal escalated into civil war. More than one thousand Shī'i combatants and civilians died in this fighting, which was characterized by atrocities and assassinations. Hizbullāh usually enjoyed the upper hand in fighting, but Syrian intervention denied it the fruits of victory. The strife ended in late 1990 in an accord mediated by Syria and Iran.

Although Hizbullāh battled its adversaries, it also cooperated with Iranian aid agencies to fund a wide range

of social and economic projects. These included a hospital and pharmacies in Beirut; small textile factories and sheltered workshops to employ families of members and "martyrs"; book allowances and scholarships for students; and street paving in Beirut and the digging of wells and reservoirs in rural areas. Hizbullāh sponsored a scout movement, summer camps, and a soccer league. The movement published a weekly newspaper and operated an independent radio station. These activities broadened the base of the movement and enhanced its ability to field fighters.

**Resistance and Democracy.** By the end of its first decade, Hizbullāh had fought and bought its way into the hearts of perhaps as many as half of Lebanon's Shī'is, but the objective of an Islamic Lebanon remained remote. On the basis of the 1989 Tā'if Accord, Syria enforced an end to the civil war, based on a fairer confessional balance. Syria also disarmed the militias and launched a determined drive to build up the authority of a Syrian-backed government in Beirut. And in 1991, the governments of Syria and Lebanon sat down with Israel in direct talks to discuss territory, security, and a possible peace.

Hizbullāh's place in the new Syrian order remained uncertain. In Beirut and parts of the south, Hizbullāh surrendered its weapons and turned over positions to the reconstituted Lebanese army. In 1992, Hizbullāh and the Revolutionary Guards evacuated the Lebanese army barracks near Ba'labakk, which had served as operational headquarters for ten years. Nevertheless, Hizbullāh's Islamic Resistance enjoyed an exemption from the general disarming of militias to permit it to continue a guerilla war of attrition against Israel's "security zone" in the south. The Islamic Resistance increased its operations, even in the midst of peace talks, and Syria pledged to disarm it only after a complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

Hizbullāh also opposed implementation of the Syrian-guaranteed Tā'if Accord, which it denounced as an American plan. Hizbullāh denounced the first stage of implementation, establishing Muslim-Christian parity in government, for perpetuating confessionalism. Hizbullāh advocated a straightforward referendum on an Islamic state; in such a state, the Christians would be entitled to protection, not parity. However, Iran prevailed on Hizbullāh to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections, the first held in twenty years, despite the fact that the elections still apportioned seats by confession. In the Bekaa Valley, Hizbullāh swept the Shī'i vote, and



the movement made a credible showing in the south, collecting a total of eight parliamentary seats—the largest single block in the fragmented parliament.

In parliament, Hizballāh organized as an opposition to the Syrian-backed government. It denounced the government's negotiations with Israel and denied all interest in cabinet positions. In most respects, Hizballāh still remained an extraparlimentary movement—a point emphasized by the deliberate obscurity of the movement's parliamentary candidates. Hizballāh signaled that its actual leaders would remain in the mosques and in the fighting ranks of the Islamic Resistance. But the "Party of God" had moved one reluctant step toward becoming a true *ḥizb* (political party) of its followers. It remained to be seen whether Hizballāh's votes would succeed, where its violence had failed, in creating an Islamic Lebanon.

[See also Amal; Hostages; Lebanon; Organization of the Islamic Jihād; Shī'ī Islam, article on Modern Shī'ī Thought; and the biography of Faḍlallāh.]

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**HOLIDAYS.** See Islamic Calendar.

**HONOR.** The notion of honor figures prominently in ensembles of ideas about respect and social status. As a comparative sociological concept, it denotes enhanced status and capacity for social relations. In more narrowly cultural terms, honor is a composite aspect of persons, social conduct, morality, and social metaphysics.

The grounds and expressions of honor are many and vary with what is important and problematic in personal interaction. Honor was first examined in tribal "codes" idealizing bravery, independence, generosity, self-control, and abilities to control the course of interactions with others. Common grounds and symbolic vehicles of honor in these milieus are ownership (in some sense of controlling the use) of land and other productive resources, the independence and generosity this facilitates along with family and kinship solidarities, the control of women's fertility, and personal characteristics of courage, wisdom, honesty, and self-possession. Although honor is sometimes represented as complementary to religion in tribal settings, piety is an essential part of honor in all its forms. For tribesmen, there is no honor apart from identity as a Muslim: the generous host, provident husband, and deferential wife and offspring are justified as God's pleasure.

Islamic piety looms larger as a source of honor for others. For descendants of the Prophet, Šūfī pirs and recognized "holy" families, honor may inhere primarily